

# SOURCE

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## Order, Grace, and Cleanliness

### The Ancient Chinese Art of Feng Shui Helps Create Harmonious Living Spaces

BY EMILY SLEDGE

**G**OT INSOMNIA? PERHAPS the energy surrounding your bed is keeping you awake. Never seem to have enough money? Maybe your "wealth energy" is literally going down the drain.

Feng Shui is all about energy and placement of objects to maximize the beneficial flow of energy. You can't see energy. Nor can you hear it, taste it, smell it, touch it. But you can *fe-e-e-el* it's effects. The root word and meaning of energy is *en*, meaning at, plus *ergen*, work. Energy, that intangible (or elusive) force at work, moves about us, moves through us, directly affecting and shaping our lives, for better or for worse.

The Chinese call this invisible energy *ch'i*, and describe it as having the qualities of Yang, or positive, and Yin, or negative. If these two qualities are balanced, then it is said that *ch'i* is good. If one of the qualities becomes stagnant, or moves with too much force in a given area, then imbalance takes over, affecting all within range. Not so good.

The art of choosing and arranging one's surroundings to best take advantage of *ch'i* is known in China as Feng Shui (pronounced *fung shway*). This Chinese method of placement advocates harmony, order, grace, cleanliness, and non-clutter.

According to David Daniel Kennedy, a Feng Shui consultant presently in Southeast Iowa, the art of Feng Shui originated in China several thousand years ago, when sages and priests were consulted for locating auspicious burial sites for ancestors. The Chinese saw no real division between the living and dead. How they treated ancestors was very important and affected their own destiny, they believed. Gradually, Feng Shui came to be used for choosing and arranging living spaces as well, to insure optimal health, wealth, and harmony.

#### Feng Shui as Practiced Today

Feng Shui is still practiced widely in China and other countries in the eastern hemisphere. Recently, it has begun to spread to the West, and is rapidly gaining popularity. Why? Because it works. It gives immediate results.

"Suppose your bathroom were situated in the wealth corner of your house," says David. "Your wealth could literally be going down the drain."

So what if a person's bathroom is situated in the wrong place? Should they move? "It usually turns out to be much more simple than that," he says, "something as easy as covering your drains when not in use, and keeping the bathroom door closed."

These are called "cures." Feng Shui utilizes various methods and objects as cures to block, re-direct, or enhance the flow of *ch'i*, depending on whether it is malefic (harmful) or benefic (helpful) energy. The purpose of the cure is to restore balance. Mirrors, for instance reflect the *ch'i*, and depending on how used, deflect malefic *ch'i* or enhance benefic *ch'i*. Wind chimes, water, and plants are also used to affect *ch'i* flow.

#### Energy and Form

The Chinese believe that there are eight major areas which shape life, and that our living spaces reflect these areas. Energy flows through the living space in specific patterns, according to Feng Shui. Depending on the strength or weakness of flow in a given area of the space, that corresponding area of life will be strong or weak. And any change of the energy flow in the area will immediately bring a change to the related area of life.

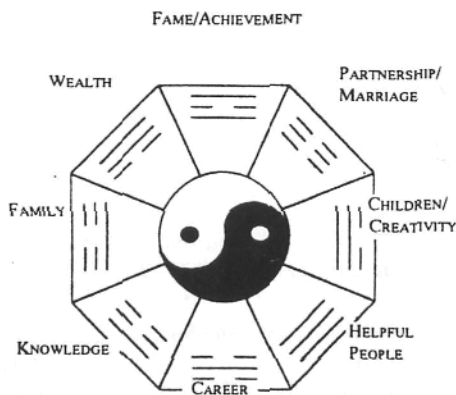
The eight areas which shape life are career, knowledge/self development, family, wealth, fame/achievement, partnerships/marriage, children/creativity, and helpful people. Central to the eight main areas of life is health. Health can affect and be affected by all the other areas.

Feng Shui uses a diagram, called a *ba-gua*, to figuratively overlay the space being considered. The *ba-gua* is an octagon whose sides correspond to the eight areas of life and whose center corresponds to health. The eight areas always fall in the same place on the diagram.

The *ba-gua* is one of the chief analytical tools used in a Feng Shui evaluation. With a little practice, an individual soon becomes adept at "reading" his or her own living situation and recognizes where weak areas are.

"Much of it is just common sense, and a matter of remembering," says David. "Intuition also plays a part. For instance, if you have a wall facing your front door a few feet away, you'll feel blocked when you enter. The damaging effect is very real on the psycho-physiological system."

Main doors represent all areas of life, as well as specifically representing career, opportunities, and boundaries. Main doors interface with you and the outer world. So if you always seem to be up against a wall in these areas of your life, check your main entrance.



The ba-gua

Fortunately, Feng Shui offers a cure, or correction, for the situation. Several, in fact. One is to install a mirror on the wall to reflect the outdoors, to enlarge and open up the space. A beautiful landscape picture, adding a sense of depth, would also work.

Ill-placed furniture becomes a stumbling block to the energy flow in your space. Suppose a sofa is placed too near a door opening. Just moving the sofa a foot or so down the wall has the effect of opening the passage and energy flow through the doorway.

### Three Areas of Prime Concern

While all parts of the house are connected and have their effect on our lives, Feng Shui considers three main areas in the home to be of prime concern.

1. **Doors**, as mentioned above. The main entrance to the house is considered the mouth of ch'i, where the life force enters. Make sure the entrance brings in large amounts of benefic energy.

2. **Beds**. The body requires rest. We spend nearly one-third of our lives in bed. The bed must be optimally placed for ideal rest, and for a sense of relationship to the earth physically (grounding, balance) and to the world relatively (interaction).

3. **Stoves**. The Chinese consider the stove to be a prime factor in creating health and wealth. It's alchemy. It's where food is transformed into life-giving substance. The ch'i in the food gives one the strength to create wealth in the world. David explains, "You may be using the freshest organic items, never eating leftovers, serving a completely balanced diet, but a stove that's dirty will still have old leftover ch'i from old food. No matter how good the food is, old ch'i weakens it, so health is not so good. The stove is where all elements become one. Attention to this area is considered to be of utmost importance."

### Results of Benefic Ch'i

Giving attention. Re-directing that invisible, elusive, moving force—making it work for you. So what does it feel like? "One thing most people experience immediately is an increased sense of vitality and life force," says David. "Personal physical energy is dramatically enhanced."

"Feng Shui is not the only determiner of destiny, but it happens to be one factor which we can easily adjust, making a profound and immediate difference," he says. "You do it yourself. You start to get in touch with your environment, your energy, and your destiny. Feng Shui is not just arranging furniture. It encompasses the whole of your environment. It also utilizes intuition, will, and intention, directed in specific ways, to create maximum results in specific life areas of your choice." □

*For more information on Feng Shui, contact Dell Hipp at (515) 472-7404.*

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*Emily Sledge is the Source Travel Editor. She'll be cutting back on travel this month to make sure her stove is spanking clean.*

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